

News from U.S. Rep. Stephanie Herseth
For Immediate Release
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HERSETH HIGHLIGHTS GROWING PROBLEM OF UNINSURED DURING "COVER THE UNINSURED WEEK"

Co-sponsors Legislation to Help Uninsured Families and Give Small Business Tools to Cover Employees

May 5, 2005, Washington, D.C. – On a conference call with reporters, U.S. Rep. Stephanie Herseth today discussed the growing problem of South Dakotans without health care insurance. This week is Cover the Uninsured Week, in South Dakota and across the country. Herseth has co-sponsored legislation to help cover uninsured individuals and families who are in need, and to give small business owners tax incentives and other tools to provide health insurance for their employees.

Herseth noted several troubling statistics about the number of uninsured South Dakotans:

In South Dakota, 91,000 people are uninsured – approximately 13 percent of our population.

More than 49,000 working South Dakotans do not have health care coverage.

In South Dakota, nearly 33 percent of uninsured adults report being unable to see a doctor when needed in the past 12 months due to cost, compared to just nearly 7 percent of adults who have coverage.

In South Dakota, nearly 39 percent of adults without health care coverage say they do not have a personal doctor or health care provider, compared with just nearly 16 percent of people with coverage.

Herseth said, "We need to raise awareness about this growing problem that affects a significant population in our state. I am working in Congress to enact legislation that would go a long way toward covering America's uninsured. The legislation I am co-sponsoring is targeted to build on programs that already work and ensure that fast-growing segments of the uninsured have access to affordable health coverage, including low-income working parents, and small business employees."

Herseth has co-sponsored two pieces of legislation to directly address the growing problem.

The first piece of legislation is The Small Business Health Insurance Promotion Act, which offers small business owners and the self-employed help in securing affordable health insurance. Under this bill, small businesses or self-employed individuals would become eligible to receive a 50 percent tax credit to help defray the cost of health insurance and provide an

incentive for businesses not currently offering coverage to do so. Additionally, the bill creates state and national multi-insurer pools to provide comprehensive and affordable health insurance choices to small employers and the self employed.

Secondly, The FamilyCare Act builds on the success of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and Medicaid in insuring children by extending coverage to their low-income working parents. While more and more children are obtaining health coverage, their parents are being left behind. There are about 7.5 million uninsured parents whose children are eligible for Medicaid and SCHIP. These parents frequently work part-time or for small businesses, and do not have access to employer-based insurance. When they do have access, they cannot afford it. The FamilyCare Act extends eligibility for SCHIP and Medicaid to these low-income working parents.

Tomorrow at 10:30 in Sioux Falls, Herseth will join Senator Tim Johnson as well as officials from the Community Health Care Association of the Dakotas to highlight the seriousness of this problem to South Dakota. This event will take place at the Sioux River Valley Community Health Clinic at 132 North Dakota Avenue, Sioux Falls.

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